

February 24, 2014

Appropriations Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
State of Connecticut
300 Capital Ave
Hartford Connecticut 06016

Mr. Bobby Berriault
Student Senator
Student Government Association
Central Connecticut State University
1615 Stanley Street
New Britain, Connecticut 06050

Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Bobby Berriault and I am a student at Central Connecticut State University. I am currently a student senator on our Student Government Association representing the student body.

As a Student Senator representing the student body at CCSU, I know that many of my friends and classmates are struggling with the high costs of attending class. Many of them are working a full time job while attending college part time. Many of them are struggling with trying to come up with enough money just to stay in school. Personally, I am struggling. I grew up really poor. I moved around from foster family to foster family, and it's a miracle that I'm even able to attend college at all. I'm a smart guy. I just never had the money or the resources that is needed in this day and age to succeed.

I know that I am not alone. One in five children in our country are born into poverty. Over 60% of American children qualify for free lunches at some point in their lives. Growing up, oftentimes I went to school hungry. It's awfully hard to learn when you're starving. But there are hundreds of thousands of children just like me. And many of my classmates here at CCSU are working (some full time jobs) just to pay for schooling. It's awfully hard to work a full time job and take five classes at the same time. How can anyone succeed in their academics if they are working 40 hours a week?

Real people are being impacted every time our tuition increases and every time our state funding decreases. To put into prospective how badly we've been cut in my five years of attending college: the first two years I was able attend my community college for free. I got full financial aid and I didn't owe a dime. My first year here at CCSU I only had to take a few thousand dollars in loans. But within the previous year, my aid has been cut in half, my student loan interest rates has doubled. Because of all this, I am going to end up owing \$33,000+ by the time I graduate – 75% of that debt I occurred within my last year here at CCSU. It wasn't my fault. It was just because of all the budget cuts at the state and federal level and my student loan interest rates doubling.

Every child in our state and our nation should have an equal chance to succeed. Part of the American dream should be if you work hard, and if you get good grades; you should be entitled to a good quality college education at a public college. We are a public school. We exist to serve the public, and not to make a profit. It just doesn't feel like that sometimes.

The sequester cuts are painful. The state budgetary cut backs are gut wrenching. But worst still, every time tuition is increased and funding is decreased, which has been every year for the past six years now – this means fewer people will be able to attend college. If I was graduating high school right now - and I'm going to be honest with you all, I would not be even thinking of going to college. I just couldn't do it with how expensive college has gotten today.

There is a staffing crisis at our states higher educational institutions. We need more professors, not more buildings. Our schools have been virtually unable to hire new professors since the economic crisis hit our state in 2008. In addition, the number of ad hoc professors across the 17 colleges and universities has risen significantly while the number of full time tenured professors has decreased significantly since the recession hit in 2008. These ad hoc professors have been forced to take on a greater workload with extremely limited resources. Our state colleges and universities need more professors before we build more classrooms.

According to the Board of Regents website, over 90% of graduates from the ConnCSU system stay in the state to pursue a career path contributing to Connecticut's economic recovery. 95% of the students in the 17 colleges and universities are accepted to our schools as Connecticut residents. Many of us have paid taxes to our state prior to attending college. Our families and our parents have been paying taxes in our state for many years prior to sending us to college.

I am asking you today to please support the Governor's proposed budget. His proposal increases funding for ConnCSU by \$416,617.00 and his proposal also provides for long term investments that total \$154.5 million. We need more long term investments for our states colleges and universities. I support the Governor's plan, and I hope that you will support his proposals in full as well.

Please do not hesitate to email me at Robert.Berriault@my.ccsu.edu with your questions, comments, or concerns.

Best regards,

Bobby Berriault
Student - Central Connecticut State University